

REMARKS

I. General Remarks.

Applicants respectfully request that the above amendments be entered and further request reconsideration of the application in view of the amendments and the remarks contained herein.

II. Disposition of the Claims.

At the time of the Final Office Action, claims 1-36 were pending. Claims 1, 2, 4-7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15-18, 20, 21, 23-27, 30, 32-34 and 36 stand rejected. Claims 3, 8, 11, 14, 19, 22, 28, 29, 31, and 35 have been objected to but indicated to be allowable if rewritten into independent form. The Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's willingness to allow these claims.

The Applicants have incorporated the limitations of dependent claim 3 into independent claim 1. In view of the Examiner's indication that claim 3 would be allowable if rewritten into independent form, the Applicants believe that independent claim 1, as amended, is now in condition for allowance. Consequently, the Applicants have canceled dependent claim 3. Also, given that dependent claims 2 and 3 were directed to distinct types of seals, dependent claim 2 no longer makes sense in view of the amendment to independent claim 1, and therefore has also been canceled. Furthermore, given that previously rejected dependent claims 4-7, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 15 are now dependent on amended claim 1, these claims are also believed to be allowable for the same reasons amended claim 1 is believed allowable.

The Applicants have also incorporated the limitations of dependent claim 28 into independent claim 16. In view of the Examiner's indication that claim 28 would be allowable if rewritten into independent form, the Applicants believe that independent claim 16, as amended, is now allowable. Consequently, the Applicants have canceled dependent claim 28.

Furthermore, given that previously rejected dependent claims 17-18, 20-21, 23-27, 30 and 32 are now dependent on amended claim 16, these claims are also believed to be allowable for the same reasons amended claim 16 is believed allowable.

Finally, the Applicants have rewritten dependent claim 14 into independent format through its amendments to independent claim 33. In view of the Examiner's indication that claim 14 would be allowable if rewritten into independent form, the Applicants believe that independent claim 33, as now amended, is in condition for allowance. This amendment has made dependent claim 35 superfluous at least in part, and therefore Applicants have deleted dependent claim 35. Furthermore, now that independent claim 33 is in allowable form, previously rejected dependent claim 36, which depends from independent claim 33 is now believed to be in condition for allowance.

III. No Waiver

All of Applicants' arguments and amendments are without prejudice or disclaimer. Indeed, the Applicants reserve their right to pursue in later applications the subject matter of original independent claims 1, 16 and 33.

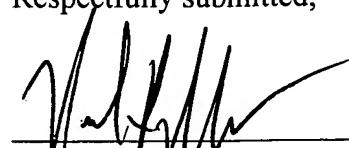
SUMMARY

Applicants submit that the application is now in condition for allowance, and earnestly solicit timely notice of the same. Should the Examiner have any questions, comments or suggestions in furtherance of the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the attorney of record by telephone, facsimile, or electronic mail.

Applicants believe that there are no fees due in association with the filing of this Response. However, should the Commissioner deem that any fees are due, including any fees for extensions of time, Applicants respectfully request that the Commissioner accept this as a

Petition Therefor, and direct that any additional fees be charged to Baker Botts L.L.P. Deposit Account No. 02-0383, Order Number 063718.0446.

Respectfully submitted,



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